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## I.

IT was a bitterly cold morning, November the 15th, 1918, and through the frosted window of the mess-room, as I ate a hurried breakfast at 6 a.m. by candle-light, I could see the car standing outside. A last stretch of gloved hands to the fire, and then out into the biting air where the racing engine alone disturbed the sleeping village. The road was crisp and crackling under the studded wheels, and with a rasp we swung into the high road and made for Le Quesnoy. We left the old fortified town on our left, and went to Beaudignies and Romeries and St. Python. There were a few lorries on the road which was otherwise deserted; patches in the pavé, artillery ammunition dumps by the wayside, a dead horse or two, a few shattered houses in each village, and the familiar jetsam of warfare testified to the recent fighting, which had brought us sixty miles since August 21st. Our way back was the way by which we had advanced, and every bit of it held some ringing memory of the last few months. Gradually the sky lightened, the paling stars dwindled out of sight, and the red disc of the sun rose majestically behind us.

This was more of a pilgrimage than a joy-ride on

my part, and I was taking perhaps my last opportunity before we went to the Rhine of going to visit B. B.'s grave at Albert. It was just three years since we had come to France together. Light snow fell at Tidworth as we entrained at the station, and his wife had been there on the platform distributing daily papers to the battalion. What a ghastly day and a ghastly journey! At the first stopping-place the station-master had held converse with us. "What a splendid lot of men," he said, and added gloomily, "To think that probably none of them will ever come home again!" B. B. was much incensed. But he wasn't far wrong, that deplorable station-master.

It was another anniversary too, for Nov. 15th, 1916, had found B. B. and me together in a dug-out which we shared with another battalion during the Beaumont Hamel fighting. Of all appalling memories I think those days, Nov. 13 to 16, hold the most vivid. It will be many years before I am able to forget the march from Bertincourt at midnight, the waiting for "zero" hour in Sixth Avenue—in a tiny shelter where the War Lord and I fell asleep and B. B. read a novel till the barrage started; the struggle in the grey light to the White City—scene of indescribable tragedies and comedies from hour to hour—where we stayed all day: the squelching, glutinous, knee-deep mud, through which after dark we tried to find an appointed headquarters in a dug-out which proved to be brimful of other headquarters and stragglers, and which had

acquired such a foul atmosphere that B. B. nearly fainted half way down the stairs and had to be helped to the surface again by the doctor and myself; the calamity of our invaluable mess sergeant wounded just outside the dug-out as he arrived with the rations; and the move at dawn after a night on the dug-out stairs to another dug-out in Valhade, where for the rest of the fight we sat cramped up on the floor, writing messages and telephoning, and getting an occasional mug of soup or cocoa from time to time through the day and night. There was just room for one man to lie down at a time, and I remember that when my turn came B. B. insisted on the Sergeant Major giving me a cup of hot milk and rum which made me sleep gloriously far beyond my allotted span.

But the misery of it all ended at dawn on the 16th, when B. B. and I sallied out into the open air, clambered out on to the top and walked back to Maily Maillet, revelling in the perfect freshness of the November morning and full of the unspeakable relief of feeling that the show which we had been regarding with apprehension for six weeks of urgent suspense was over and done with. B. B. was grey and haggard, the deep lines of his face deepened by the strain of mental and physical over-exertion; but we both felt new life coming to us as we stretched our limbs and set out through the wet grass towards a warm billet, a stunning breakfast, a divine bath and bed. Great days, these, in retrospect.

Yet another Nov. 15, last year, 1917, found us I think together, though I am hazy about the dates. This time it was at Herzele, while the Passchendael show was still flickering and we were in reserve well behind the line but within sound of the guns. We had a delightful billet for the mess in an old house on the road, and there were many pleasant meetings for tea and "spoof"—a favourite game of B. B.'s when he could not get good bridge. But at this time he was sickening for leave, and was feeling wretchedly ill and so wracked with rheumatism that he could scarcely walk. He also dreaded the prospect—then imminent but never realized—of going to Italy; but he went on leave one cold morning, and was recalled two days later because he had been given command of a brigade. To our astonishment he arrived back as fit and jolly as ever; his rheumatism had vanished when crossing the channel, and the excitement of his promotion had given a new fire to his spirits. There was little time for talking; he was leaving us after two years of constant companionship in France; the tailor was busy sewing red tabs on to his coat, there were battalion matters to settle, and we all felt rather bewildered and distracted. When the car drove off the next day—piled to its utmost capacity with his kit—he turned away. The leave-taking had been too much for us all, and the War Lord and I went miserably back into the mess. Within a week the Division instead of going to Italy was entrained and taken down to the Cambrai

fighting, and though much befel us during the following months it was not till the following January that B. B. came back to us as Brigadier of his old Brigade; and by that time we were in the line near Gouzeaucourt.

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For a few miles, as the car bumped through Ribecourt and Havrincourt and over the Canal du Nord, of infamous memory, to Hermies and Bertincourt and the desolate streets of Bapaume, the winter days of last year and the autumn days of this year held my mind with a dreadful familiarity that every now and then lost its dreadfulness, as I recognised the hole in the bank which had once been our headquarters outside Haplincourt, or as I remembered cheerful walks across country in the frail sunlight. The country side had an air of chastened demureness, as if anxious to deny its execrable past—like the engaging innocence of the sea after a night of storm and wreckage. And when we left Bapaume the Albert Road was smooth and neat; gangs of German prisoners were idly repairing the few treacherous patches in the pavé, and a frosty solitude filled the battlefield on either side of the road.

Just after passing the Butte de Warlencourt, with its great cross upstanding against the sky, we punctured, and as I walked up the road to warm hands and feet I saw the ruins of Le Sars on my right, and the tank still there which I had last seen blazing in its death agony on the morning of March the 26th. A little further on was Destremont Farm—so far from being

a farm now, by the way, that it is almost impossible to recognise even the vestiges of an entrance gate—and on sight of Destremont Farm the thoughts of B. B. came flooding back. It was to this spot on the main road that his body and Colin B.'s had been carried along in the never-ending stream of tangled traffic on the evening of March 25th. Shoulder-high on stretchers they went, carried by Sergt. McC. and his faithful men, through mile after mile of the old Somme battle-field now covered, as far as the eye could see, with moving troops and lines of transport. It was not a rabble in headlong retreat, but an orderly retirement, unmolested by the enemy, of huge numbers of men; and along the main road the traffic was three deep, all moving towards Albert, lorries, wagons, ambulances, staff cars, guns, limbers and carts. Divisional headquarters were at Destremont Farm, in a couple of tents, and here Sergt. McC. laid down his load and decided to await a lorry. At 8 p.m. three lorries turned up—against the stream of traffic—full of ammunition, which was unloaded by the side of the road. Sergt. McC. accosted the N.C.O. in charge. “Where have you come from?” “Albert.” “Ah, ah! Do you know that I’ve been waiting for you since ten o’clock this morning? Where have you been all the time?” “What for?” “Why, for these two generals’ bodies, of course. Didn’t you get your orders?” “No; never heard —.” “Well don’t stand there arguing. Turn your lorries round, and we’ll get loaded up quick.”

“But I ain’t had no orders ——.” “Do you want me to go in and report you to the Major-General himself for not having come earlier?” The lorryman, conscious that he had been much delayed on the journey, was thus easily bluffed, and ten minutes later Sergt. McC. and his men and the two bodies were on the way to Albert. Arrived there they found the town in confusion; troops from all directions were pouring through it, and the contents of ordnance stores and the officers’ club were being distributed without reserve. There was no mortuary, but many empty billets, and Sergt. McC. selected a good house in which to spend the night. Early in the morning they were at the cemetery and dug two graves six foot deep, and the bodies were buried by an officer in command of a Cyclists’ Corps, whom the sergeant had waylaid in the street for this purpose. Near by was a disused monumental mason’s yard, and from this two slabs were obtained, and suitable inscriptions scratched on them, after which Sergt. McC., having made two or three sketches of the graves, withdrew his party and trekked across country till he found us again at Forceville two days later. He brought with him the contents of B. B.’s pockets, including the three sovereigns that he had always carried in his breeches pocket “for luck.”

I have often smiled over the almost romantic incongruity of this last episode, knowing how deeply B. B. himself must have relished it. Sergt. McC., with his light blinking eyes and unquenchable energy and

humour, was a great favourite of B. B.'s, and there is no one that he would sooner have chosen to bury him. He always said that if he was killed he did not care in the least what happened to the remains of his body, but he must have been touched by the dogged devotion that brought his body against almost insuperable difficulties through the turmoil of the retreat to a safe resting-place. Within twenty-four hours of his funeral the Germans were in possession of Albert, and for the next five months trench warfare raged round the town and its cemetery.

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The puncture mended, we raced along the high road towards Pozieres, and ever quick memories surged and beat upon my heart. The road of which Mr. Horning wrote a poem in *The Times* that B. B. had loved; the road along which the heavy guns had been in position all the time that we held the line at Courcelette. There are few more startling shocks for horse and man than the flame and thunder of a heavy howitzer within a few yards of you on a dark winter's night, and few more historic pieces of battlefield in France than the ground about Pozieres. But we had taken no part in that fighting; for us, in the winter of 1916-1917, the unrelieved monotony of desolation had been only a weariness to the eye—no houses, no trees, nothing but shell-holes and rubble and a miasma of tragedy.

Past the old gum boot store I craned out of the car to see Wolfe Huts, a row of Nissen huts under the lea



fo the slope on the north of the road, but they were gone. They had housed us during the most bitterly cold weather of February, 1917, when uncooked eggs froze solid, and the bottles of Perrier had to be thawed with immense care by the War Lord round the stove in the mess; when it was a treat to escape from "rest" to the fœtid warmth of the West Miraumont dug-out in the line; and when B. B. used to take his constitutional up and down the main road with a woollen wrap concealing all his face except his eyes. From these huts we had gone up for the Miraumont fight of February 17th, and I remember the last night there, and poor old John W——, best-hearted of Irishmen, coming into the mess in the evening and insisting on a repetition of "Son of Mine" on the gramophone, to which he crooned in tuneless sympathy. Two nights later he was dying in the C.C.S., after a day of agony in a shell-hole, and when he was dead we brought his body to Ovillers across the valley, where the battered remains of the battalion buried him, and put up a cross to the memory of him and of the other officers and men who had died in front of Miraumont. A terrible fight that was, and more strange and gallant deeds were done in it, and more mystery hangs about the events of the day, than in any fight that the battalion survived.

As we topped the last rise Albert lay before us in ruins, so changed from the town that we had known in the old days, with its roomy billets and officers' club

and canteens, and the miraculous leaning Madonna. We had first seen the Madonna in the distance from Montauban in the Delville Wood days of 1916, and she had brooded over our fortunes month after month. But now in 1918 she was thrown down, and the Armistice was signed.

The car turned to the left in the middle of the almost deserted town, and in a minute we were at the cemetery, and I was hunting for No. 28, Row R, among the dilapidated crosses. In five minutes I knew that my fears had been only too true; the very headstones had vanished, large but shallow shell-holes had obliterated all sign of Sergt. McC.'s labour, and above B. B. and Colin the crumbled earth was blackened with the last shattering detonations of the warfare that they had escaped. Peace to their bones. I was too miserable and disheartened to lay on the ground the chrysanthemums that I had brought in the car.

## II.

So much for pilgrimages and gravestones, for tangled cemeteries, and all the trappings and conventions of piety! So much for mortality itself, and tortured bodies and the bones of heroes! We, who cling jealously to the decencies of death, have learned the deeper truth that respect and loving care for material things are at the mercy of the gusts of Fate, while the treasuring of memories and fair names and high examples is fanned by the steady inspiration of eternity. I saw to-day in the paper photographs of the proposed official memorial headstone, cross and altar for the military cemeteries, and someday I suppose the waste ground at Albert will be groomed into tranquillity and beautified with marble and flowers, and Peace will be palpable, where she has always been, among the dead. And others will write in leisure the histories of the fallen, and the tale of their deeds; and honour will be done to B. B. But I would wish, while the spirit of war is still around us, to pay my little tribute to him in the same way as Sergt. McC. carved the tombstone for him, in rough characters, uneven and halting, for the sake of the great friendship that was mine.

He used to say that he supposed he was the happiest

and luckiest man in the world, and if the measure of a man's sacrifice is the price of what he gives up, he brought a lordly tribute to the altar of patriotism. He was 44 or 45 years old at the beginning of the war, and on the reserve of officers. After a few weeks in command of a prisoners of war camp he was appointed second in command of a service battalion which was being raised in Kensington, and during the first winter of the war was engaged in tireless organization of eager but heterogeneous troops, in the surmounting of official and natural obstacles, in the training of officers and men, and in the thousand and one tasks of arranging supplies and of equipping and moulding the mob of cockneys and colonials that he eventually made into one of the finest battalions of Kitchener's Army. The mists have closed in over those early days, but one still gets glimpses of him in his quick judgments, decisive opinions and debonair brilliancy of advice and criticism. He was a born trainer of troops, far more than a merely sound regular officer. His promotion to the command of the battalion, when there was an immediate prospect of going to France, was immensely popular, because everybody felt that he was the leader that could be trusted with the lives of his men.

We came to France and learned our first lessons in the trenches at Cambrin in the frost and thaw of Christmas, 1915; in the spring we took over from the French at Souchez; in May we were flung into the line at Vimy Ridge, where the enemy had made

a successful attack, and our hold on the ridge itself was very precarious. This was our first fight. From Vimy in July we were hurried to the Somme battlefield, and took part in the final capture of Delville Wood; thence to Hebuterne, a charming relief; and thence to the line opposite Serre, with its incredible mud and the suspense of the Beaumont Hamel attack, postponed from day to day for weeks. After the fight was over in November we went right back to the Abbeville area, and spent Christmas in the grubby luxury of a little village. But early in January we were off again, this time to Courcellette, as I have already told, and the struggle for Petit Miraumont in February was followed, when the enemy began his great retreat to the Hindenburg line, by the fight for Grevillers Trench. Then we went up to the Arras front, where the British attack had just broken the front system, and we looked down from captured German gun-pits on to the plain of Douai, with Bailleul below us and the infamous wood of Oppy beyond it. Strenuous days of fighting for everyone! Uncut wire broke the battalion on March the 28th, and two days later the remnants were made into a composite company to fight again. Drafts came to replenish the ranks, and we held the line between Arleux and Oppy till June, when, to our great joy, we went northwards in buses and found ourselves in the familiar villages and trenches of the Cambrin front, now a vision of green tranquillity. It was too good to last, and there was a crescendo of

activity during the weeks that we spent at Cambrin and Givenchy and Festubert, but we were withdrawn to rest and train in the Auchel area, and had six weeks of refreshment. Thence in November we trekked northwards towards the Ypres front that we had never seen, and halted near Wormhoudt, with the expectation of going into the Passchendael fighting.

It was here that B. B. left us to take command of a brigade in another Division. He had practically raised and trained the battalion, and had commanded it in France for two solid years in all its fights and in all the fortunes of trench warfare. Those who are acquainted with actual warfare can appreciate the tremendous strain that this involved ; there are probably very few commanding officers with such a record. B. B. was, I believe, recommended for a brigade early in 1916 but a series of changes of corps, the mislaying of papers and so on, seemed to frustrate his promotion, and sometimes he used to think that it was a discredit to him that he was for so many months in command of a battalion. But he dreaded the idea of separation from the men that he knew so well, and when the promotion came and he left us he spent, as he used afterwards to say, the most miserably lonely months of his soldiering in France. He had often commanded our own brigade for short periods, at Vimy and in the Miraumont fight, for instance ; for, as it happened, he was the senior battalion commander of the brigade, and our brigadier was the senior brigade commander

in the Division, so that, as long as leave was open, B. B. spent at least four weeks in every three months at Brigade Headquarters, while the Divisional Commander and the Brigade Commander went in turn on leave. Without these spells of a more comfortable life I doubt if his health could have lasted.

He left us in November, and returned to us as our brigadier in the following January, when we had just taken over the line on the Welsh Ridge between Gonnellieu and La Vacquerie. Almost the first thing that happened was the grievous news that he was to lose his old battalion from the brigade. Under the new system of three-battalion brigades it had been selected by lot for disbandment, and all that B. B. could do was to use his influence for softening the blow for his old friends, and for finding suitable jobs for them in other battalions. A certain number of us, including Sergt. McC., the mess cook and mess sergeant and myself, found our way to brigade headquarters, and something of the familiar atmosphere was transferred to the less genial surroundings of the brigade. These were anxious days, when the great German attack was reported imminent, and every effort had to be made to secure the defences of the line before the blow fell. For a month B. B. lived in a dug-out at Villers Plouich, very close to the front line, and with his energy and alertness he soon acquired an almost uncanny knowledge of the trenches. But he was not allowed to remain so far forward, and new dug-outs

were prepared a mile behind on the Highland Ridge for brigade headquarters, while the front line troops were thinned out till only a small garrison remained to hold the advanced system. Then the gas-shelling began on March 11th, and after six nights of it the brigade had lost nearly half of its effective strength, and on the 19th was relieved by another brigade, and went to Manancourt and Equancourt for a rest. At dawn on the 21st the German attack opened. B. B., terribly exhausted after seven weeks of continuous dug-out life, found himself detached temporarily from the Division, and ordered to fill the joint in the harness between the Third and Fifth armies. In the confusion caused by attachment to strange Divisions—now to one, now to another—he had to act very largely on his own initiative, and all his gifts as a tactician were put to the test. He got no sleep, his meals were precarious, and, worst of all, he ran out of cigarettes. On the morning of the 24th, when our headquarters in a hut at Manancourt first came under machine gun fire, he had realized that the gap between the two armies was widening, and had sent his third battalion to help the other two in their desperate task of keeping touch on either flank. "I shall lose all three of them," he said; "I don't see how they can extricate themselves." We were walking by the roadside towards Le Mesnil, which was to be our next headquarters. The road was full of transport, all going in one direction, and troops of other Divisions in extended order were



retiring across the fields. For awhile the sounds of gun and rifle fire had died down; the sun was mastering the last strongholds of the morning mist, and a light haze lay over the country-side. "If only our wives could see us!" he said to me. "They couldn't believe that we are so close to one of the biggest battles of the world." His outward cheerfulness never failed him; when fatigue and the loud rumours of disaster had made all his staff glum and silent, he rallied us all and shamed us by his courage; and it was only when he was alone that the lean figure seemed to droop at all, and the lined face to fall into a greyness of exhaustion.

After a quick luncheon at Le Mesnil in a house which Colin B——, the staff captain, had secured from a frightened veterinary officer for our mess, B. B. went off with the Brigade Major on horseback to try to reach the headquarters of the three battalions in the direction of Equancourt. But within half an hour Le Mesnil was under heavy shell-fire, and B. B. found his way barred by machine-gun fire. Later in the evening we all met again at some shanties by the roadside near Le Transloy, and B. B., distressed by his failure to reach the battalion commanders and by the wild rumours that were brought by fugitives, was lamenting the apparently inevitable loss of all his brigade. But small bodies of troops began to arrive, and by nightfall nearly 300 men had reappeared, and there was news of others in precarious, but not desperate, situations further east. B. B. got some sleep that night, but we breakfasted at

dawn on the 25th, and were early on our way to Gueudecourt, to which the brigade was ordered to retire. I walked with him through the clear early air across country, and we reached Gueudecourt by the plank road, and meeting a staff officer of the Division heard to our joy that the brigade was again under the orders of the Division and was to defend the village, which is nothing but a heap of ruins and shell-holes, grim relic of the Somme fighting. My recollections of that morning are confused; we were oppressed by fatigue and hunger, the mess-cart having been lost in the stream of traffic that thronged every road. Exhausted troops lay basking in the sun by the roadside, and I was detailed to maintain the steady current of wagons and carts and limbers through the village, while B. B. sat on a mound and wrote his orders for the defensive positions to be taken up by the heterogeneous troops at his disposal. No headquarters could be found for him, but Colin B—— had a tent put up by the roadside on the west of the village, and there was a camp chair for B. B. to sit on near by. Gradually the troops were despatched to their positions, and gradually the sound of the fighting drew nearer. Generals and staff officers from other Divisions rode up to tell their news, and urge retirement in conjunction with the troops on right and left, which could be seen streaming across the countryside in the blazing sunlight in perfect order. Suddenly a 5.9 shell burst about four hundred yards to our left beyond the village. A ranging shot, said

B. B., and was anxious because it implied that when the enemy attacked he would probably put down a barrage across the west of the village. Just then two generals came up, and persuaded B. B. that it was useless to defend the village if both his flanks were exposed, and he sat down and wrote a message to the officer commanding the troops in front of the village telling him to retire at his discretion when his flanks were in the air, and adding that brigade headquarters were moving back a mile. The message was timed 5.30 p.m., and he handed it to me to put into an envelope. While I was doing this another single shell fell just in front of me. When I went forward to the spot I found B. B. and Colin B— and the latter's servant lying dead close by the tent. They were hit just as they were starting off for our new headquarters, and the shell had burst at their feet, and they were lying on their faces, almost like men asleep; but they were quite dead. No more shells fell near the spot for some time.

### III.

B. B. was a striking figure; perhaps the most striking and best-known figure in the Division. "One of the landmarks of the Division," said a colonel to me when we spoke of his death. His tall, lean, athletic form, scrupulously dressed, and his rather brown, rather lined, rather hawk-like face were familiar wherever he went. To his acquaintances debonair and jocular, with fine shades of irony and sympathy; to strangers urbane and masterful; to men that he disliked or despised ruthless; to his closest friends the most lovable and noble of leaders. He was impatient of stupidity and of that chicken-livered complacency which during the war often masqueraded as common sense; his humour often led him into a freakishness of conduct that raised the eyebrows of the uninitiated; he flaunted his whims in the face of the regular army and of a no less regular world. He had been through the mill as a regular officer, and had gained much worldly wisdom thereby; he knew how to attain his object against difficulties. "Strafe a man first of all," he would say, "till he doesn't know where he is; then be extremely pleasant to him, and he will be so delighted at the relief that he will give you exactly what you want and think what

an uncommonly nice fellow you are into the bargain." He loved strafing traffic on the roads, especially if it belonged to Territorials; and after a violent explosion of wrath that made your ears tingle he would suddenly burst out laughing in relish of his violence. There never was a more truly kind-hearted man; he was always devising schemes for making this or that man happier, and his heart bled for the necessary discomforts and troubles of his men. The padre remembers being invited to go round billets with him in some particularly miserable village. After visiting one or two of them, B. B. said, "Come away, I can't stand any more of this; it's appalling for the poor devils." But he probably would not have said this except to the padre. Although he suffered tortures of sympathy, he never flinched from what he conceived to be his duty; and in the worst times of all, when he thought that the lives of his men were being needlessly sacrificed, his wrath and pity never affected the coolness of the brain that dictated orders.

He had the card-player's brain—keen, calculating and decisive, looking far ahead and far behind, working at its best under high pressure. I am not qualified to speak of his military achievements, but I do know, at any rate, that he always commanded the unwavering confidence of officers and men, and no one ever doubted his leadership for an instant. He refused to burden his mind with too much matter, or to interfere in affairs of routine which should be left to subordinate officers.

His short addresses to new recruits were models of geniality, candour and *esprit de corps*, and his pride in the battalion blazed into flame at the slightest provocation. He had nursed and trained it on his own lines, with very definite ideas as to the means of extracting the best from the material; and while he had all the experience and strength of the regular officer he was not in the least hide-bound, but had adapted his methods with real liberality of thought to the new conditions of warfare and the new types of soldiers. We felt him to be a tower of strength, and felt at the same time that he was one of us rather than a regular officer of the old school.

"If they don't want me they can kick me out to-morrow," he would say; "I've lost quite enough fishing already." Even on the day before his death he talked to me of the river at home, and of all the fine sport that he was missing. He was the keenest of fishermen, as he was the most devoted of husbands and fathers, and only those who knew him intimately could realize what immense claims his home life had on his thoughts. He spoke constantly of his wife and the two boys who were at school, and wrote home at least one letter every day without fail, so that the coming and going of the mail were matters of urgent excitement always. Gradually the details of the domestic picture were filled in; one began to visualize the rare and beautiful comradeship of his love, and the tranquil and utterly happy routine of his life for the last few years

before the war, when he had left the army and given up hunting and polo and the triumphs of the steeple-chase; it was a round of race meetings, of fishing and shooting, of bridge and visits. That may not sound very fine or noble now, but there was this about it, that it was a life of comfort filled with blessedness, utterly and unreservedly relished. He thought himself the happiest man in the world, and if he was happy he certainly diffused happiness. The war found him in something of a groove of good living, like a great many other folk, but it found no one readier to answer the call. The measure of his sacrifice was the price of what he gave up, as I have said; and if his Irish blood gave a fire to his impetuousness and to the lavishness of his sacrifice, his cool brain taught him to husband his resources and to increase his value to his country by every means in his power. He realized early in the campaign that if officers and men were to give of their best they must be well looked after; they must be well fed, and must have plenty of leave. Personally he needed both things more than most; his health was not at all good though his constitution was wiry and active, and I venture to guarantee that he never went home on leave without being practically at the end of his tether. Half of his leave was often spent in bed, and once at least he had to get an extension, and then only came back to us against his doctor's orders. What he suffered at times few of us ever guessed, and while he was applying for leave as if he had no cares but for

himself, he was dosing himself from day to day in a frantic effort to avoid being sent to hospital, and possibly losing the battalion. I would not mention this but for a fear that some people who knew him less well may still think that he was "one of those men who are always asking for leave," and no innuendo could be more mischievous or baseless than a suggestion of selfishness in this matter. He firmly believed that every officer, to be efficient, should go home for a fortnight every three months regularly, and he left no stone unturned to obtain this leave for all his officers, and for himself as well. But others were far more able to do without it than he was.

Of his relations with men it is easy to say too much or too little. He was the father of his battalion, not the mother; his pride and admiration and joy when he watched it or spoke of it were an inspiration to others. He marvelled at the spirit of his beloved veterans, worn out with the drudgery and hardship of the incessant routine, struggling under impossible loads in villainous conditions of rain and mud; loved their grumbles and humour and indomitable perseverance; took their courage and initiative for granted, and never ceased to wonder how they could "stick" the unromantic torture of interminable "fatigues." Other commanding officers might envy the unhesitating devotion, born of confidence and affection, which B. B., without pandering or ostentation, won from the individuals of his battalion.



For this was a man compact of kindness and unselfishness, whose sole thought was the fitting of himself and others for the trials around them and ahead of them, whose sole object was to attain the balance that combines happiness and efficiency. I am conscious of so great a debt of gratitude to him for innumerable acts and thoughts of wise forbearance and discreet benevolence that I am often apt to forget him as the creator and sustainer of a wonderful fighting organization in my memories of him as the best of friends and counsellors. His example as a commanding officer is only less striking and memorable than his influence as an intimate sharer with us in the comedies and tragedies of daily life at the front. Of his personal courage, for instance, I have said nothing, for it seems almost an insult to mention it. Over and over again he exposed himself to what seemed to me almost certain death, because he wanted to see the wire for himself in daylight, or to explore a half-dug trench. He came to us on Vimy Ridge through a shattering barrage, and at once set to work to disentangle the chaos that he had been sent to put straight: there was nothing but the pitiable condition of his companion to show from what an appalling experience he had just emerged. At another time he conceived that the morale of the men required stiffening, and insisted on accompanying all the patrols into No Man's Land, until it was represented to him that his presence worried rather than encouraged his

men. But to mention instances like these is to blaze a few trees in a forest. He never asked anyone to take any risk that he was not perfectly ready to take himself, and he took many risks that he would not have asked anyone to share.

When I recall him to my mind, it is generally to see him in the intimate little circle of the mess, reading a novel in front of the fire, in a brown leather waistcoat with slippers on his feet and a cigarette in a long holder in his mouth: getting up to put his writing-pad in his special corner of the mantle-shelf and to slip his fountain pen into its cardboard box; cutting bread from the loaf and toasting it himself; sitting down to bridge with the doctor and old man G—— and poor S—— who was missing at Miraumont; listening to his favourite Faust records on the gramophone; writing voluminously to his wife; having his glass of sherry and bitters before dinner, or looking at his watch at 10 p.m. and then at the War Lord, whose duty it was to mix the evening drink at precisely that hour; ragging everyone, laughing at everything, making the world every minute of the day a little bit the better because he lived in it; the gallantest, cheerfulest, finest fellow that a man could ask to have for a leader and a friend.

*December, 1918.*

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